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# ***THE JOURNAL OF THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY***



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## *Throssel Hole Priory*

Throssel Hole Priory is a training monastery, parish church and retreat centre following the Sōtō Zen Buddhist tradition. The Priory is affiliated with Shasta Abbey, whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Jiyu-Kennett, Rōshi. Shasta Abbey, Headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives of the Sōtō Zen Church, is located in Mt. Shasta, California, U.S.A. The Priors of Throssel Hole Priory are disciples of Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett and follow her Teaching.

### *...and Journal*

*The Journal of Throssel Hole Priory* is published as a service to people who are seriously interested in the practice of Buddhism. Through the Journal the Priory members and friends share their understanding and experience. We invite our readers to submit material arising from the practice of meditation to be considered for publication. Opinions expressed in each article are those of its author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Priors. The Journal is published bimonthly (or, if less frequently, with an equivalent number of pages). The subscription rate is £3.25 annually, or £2.75 if paid by standing order.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

To Our Readers . . . . .	2
From <i>The Book of Life</i> . . . . .	4
A Letter of Appreciation . . . . .	11
On Conversion and Belief . . . . .	12
The <u>Real</u> Work . . . . .	14
Disclaimer . . . . .	15
Notice . . . . .	17
Before Lumbini . . . . .	18
Priory News . . . . .	28

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## TO OUR READERS

Amidst the responsibilities, busy-ness, worries and pleasures and pains of daily life, it is very easy to lose sight of the point of it all. That point is not really different for any of us--monk or layman, man or woman, Buddhist or Christian. When we wander lost among the differences of life, we think that external changes can make or break us spiritually. "If only I were a monk...", "If only I had fewer worldly responsibilities...", "If only I weren't married...", and so on. Meanwhile, within each activity we do, within each moment of the day, is an infinite depth that we simply overlook because we are looking for something else. If I am a monk, then my training, my life, is to be the best monk I can be--"best" not in a competitive sense, but in the sense of doing everything that I need to do as a monk with meditation as the basis of the activity. This is keeping the point of it all constantly before my eyes. I *happen* to be a man who is a monk. Does a woman or man who is a layman have any less opportunity or ability to train than I do? Does a Christian or a Muslim have less opportunity or ability than a Buddhist? On some levels, the differences between monk and layman, man and woman, Buddhist and Christian are important and need to be known and respected. But when it comes to moment-to-moment, living meditation, these differences do *not* matter. And it is on this level that every Zen trainee must find his or her spiritual meaning.

As we find that meaning, we may find that we *have* to do certain things in order to be as true as possible to That to which we are constantly returning in moment-to-moment meditation. For some people, training as a monk is *right*; for others, living in the world and training as a layman is *right*; for some, following a Buddhist Teacher is *right*; for others, following a Christian or Muslim or Hindu Teacher is *right*. But to find out what is *right* in this sense of "that which we must do in order to remain true to our True Nature", we must begin to put first things first in our lives. And *that* can *only* be

done by allowing the *meditation* in each thought, word and action to be the thing that matters most. Dōgen Zenji expressed this when he said, "The means of training are thousandfold but pure Zazen must be done." And Keizan Zenji put it even more forcefully when he wrote, "Only when you concentrate your mind will Buddhas appear." I know that doing this is not easy. But when will it be easier than it is now?

If we believe that our Treasure is within this present body and mind and that no external change, no person, no delusion even, can alter this fact for better or worse, then we have the basis for being fully ourselves--just that and nothing more or less--while respecting completely the training of others, no matter how different to us they may seem to be. In this Journal, we affirm our respect for the many people who, in many ways, as Buddhists or as followers of any other spiritual Path, are bringing themselves, and helping others to come, back to the Cosmic Buddha. We especially wish to affirm our fundamental unity of purpose with the World Fellowship of Buddhists and with Buddhists of all lands and schools who are supporting the restoration of the Buddha's birthplace, Lumbini (in Nepal), as a shrine of great importance to all Buddhists. We reprint in these pages the article "Before Lumbini" by Siri Buddhasukh both because of the great importance of the Teaching which it presents and because in so doing we hope to lend our support to the Lumbini project.

We are especially happy to be able to present in this issue of *The Journal of Throssel Hole Priory* a chapter from Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett's forthcoming book, *The Book of Life*. The insight into the nature of things which seem at first to be far removed from ordinary experience can do a great deal to alleviate much fear, grief and confusion. Understanding based in humility opens the way to acceptance.

--Rev. Rōshi Kōshin Schomberg, O.B.C.

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\**Zen is Eternal Life*, pp. 290 and 205.



# THE BOOK OF LIFE

Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett, O.B.C.

## Chapter IX.

### Spiritualism, Demons, Ghosts and Visions.

*(The Book of Life, scheduled to be published by the Shasta Abbey Press this spring, is a thorough explanation of the workings of karma. The authors Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett, Abbess, and Rev. Rōshi Daizui MacPhillamy discuss how to cleanse karma and harmonize the body and mind through Zen practice. The following chapter comes from Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett's section of the book which is entitled "The Third Law of the Universe, the Law of Karma is Inevitable and Inexorable.")*

Theories abound throughout the religions of the world with regard to spiritualism, demons, ghosts and visions. All the great religions, including Buddhism, view the first three with displeasure and the last with caution. Buddhism, however, categorically states that the first is to be absolutely eschewed and even goes so far as to admonish Zen priests against it in the "Secret Papers." The following is what I have personally found to be true and which many Buddhists believe although there may be some schools which will think differently on these matters.

If the reader has understood the foregoing pages clearly, he will know that past life experiences are but ghostly perfumes to be cleansed and washed away in the Water of the Spirit of the Cosmic Buddha. However, there are people, especially in the West where past life experiences, owing to the teachings of Western religion, are not believed in, who, by accident, come into contact with bits and peices of their own or other people's past lives. Owing to their lack of understanding and belief therein they consider these splinters from the past to be spirit guides sent from the world of the dead to help them in this present life or to assist them in making contact with their departed loved ones.

Because the experiencing of past lives is extraordinarily real, it is very important to have someone easily available who understands what to do when they occur: if a person knows nothing whatsoever about past life experiences, a karmic spark can become so terrifying that the person feels he is possessed by demons. Worse still, he can become so fascinated by it that he gives it the dignity of power over him as a spirit guide. When the latter is done, the person actually permits what is only a ghostly perfume to take shape and substance. Since this ghostly perfume was an originally uncleansed piece of karma, only reappearing in order to teach the person what *not* to do, the person who does not cleanse it now becomes a medium for the expression of that unclean and spiritually sick karma which continues to spread the wrong ideas which originally led to its destruction. If the medium persists in what he or she is doing, it is likely that they will be destroyed by their "guide" since the spark gains momentum and energy from the medium and, wishing to be cleansed even whilst persisting to the contrary, frequently kills that which will not do what it truly wants, i.e. to be reunited with the Cosmic Buddha. The "dead relatives" and "friends" that such sparks "contact" are other karmic sparks that are eager to find earthly homes, hence another reason for the death of genuine mediums during trance states. No spark, or even whole past life, can kill unless it is dignified with eager acceptance *and* a desire, on the part of the person experiencing it, to continue its existence. During exorcisms in the East such sparks are embraced joyfully as jangles in the karmic stream that need cleansing and sending back to the Cosmic Buddha; they are not embraced as long lost friends or relatives whose lives are to be perpetuated and no attempt is made to drive them further into duality by ordering them into *permanent* separation from the Cosmic Buddha in a hell. Buddhism is a religion that transcends Unity; transcending duality is but the first step in that direction. Just being an uncleansed karmic spark is sufficient of a hell in itself without a priest being so lacking in compassion as to force the spark to stay that way by offering it no comfort whatsoever. In so doing such a priest continues.



karma, makes the jangle worse than it was before, and does a disservice to the Cosmic Buddha Whom he has sworn to serve. The "Secret Papers" contain explicit ceremonies for helping such sparks.

The more spiritually mature a person is in the mystical sense the more likely he is to pick up stray pieces of karma. Because of the fragmentation of karma, owing to there being no permanent and unchangeable ego at the time of death, it sometimes happens that stray sparks of karma are left floating, as it were, in the atmosphere and people who have done much meditation, or who are naturally spiritually inclined, can unwittingly pick them up. It is important to know that such things, whilst being very scary if they are not understood, are completely harmless if properly handled. One does not need to get a third party to "cast out" one's "demons;" any person, with a belief in God or the Cosmic Buddha, who believes he has become "possessed," has only to show these sparks compassion by cleansing them and sending them back to the Cosmic Buddha. I have explained how this is done in *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*. There is no such thing as possession by demons unless one is ignorant of the above. *Everyone* has the capacity to deal with such things by himself so long as his belief is strong. A lady visited me recently saying that a religious teacher with whom she had been studying was causing her to be possessed. My disciples and I were able to prove to her that she, and only she, was in command of herself and that all she had to do was to believe in the Cosmic Buddha and order the voices that were speaking through her to be silent. This she did and the voices ceased. The problem came back again several months later when she let herself doubt in the Cosmic Buddha's ability to help her. If once a person gets to that stage of spiritual growth at which such sparks can be comprehended, it is impossible for him or her to lead a normal, productive life without maintaining a highly active faith in the Cosmic Buddha. Only by so doing has a person a means of cleansing, and therefore freeing themselves from, the karmic sparks which, since he or she has trained themselves, are clutching desperately at them for help. I have often said that



one should not meditate unless one intends to continue for the rest of one's life. This is because one is not only beckoning to the Cosmic Buddha; one is also attracting all the karma that is longing for help and reunion with That Which Is. In Marlowe's "Faust" hell is described as "being separated from God;" if a person meditates, all that uncleansed karma that longs to be with Him again rushes to get help. There are no such things as demons; only despairing karmic jangles.

The above information on spiritualism and demons is *not* a recommendation to hang out a shingle for the purpose of performing so-called "past-life therapy," karmic-jangle removing or exorcism. Whilst it is true that any person can help himself if his faith is strong enough, it is equally true that *no* third party can help him *safely* unless that third party has undergone the proper training for so doing. For such a third party skill is a necessary adjunct to faith and such skill can *only* be obtained by proper training under a genuinely licensed Zen Master. It is also true that the above remarks *only* apply to *genuine* mediums. I am not speaking of, nor do I have any patience with, bell-ringing, table-rapping frauds and fortune-tellers. I am only speaking of what are commonly called "gifted spiritualists"--and the word "gifted" is a misnomer. Fake mediums belong in jail; genuine mediums, if they do not understand the desirability of cleansing jangles rather than causing them to materialise, face, at least, the possibility of madness and, at worst, sudden death.

The reader is doubtless wondering what substance such sparks are made of. I have heard that Tibetan Buddhism states that they are wrongly used energy and, since the only matter that we are composed of is pure energy, these sparks desire greatly to be reunited with us. Zen takes this a step further. In our True state we are one with the Cosmic Buddha Who, when transcended, is Pure Love, therefore there is no such thing as a Cosmic Buddha and no such thing as *I*. Karmic sparks are the result of wrongly used, i.e. egotistical, love and may therefore be properly called slightly dirtied,

or saddened, love which is longing for a return to its pure state which can only come about if it is assisted by a being somewhat similar to that which originally sullied it. By cleansing such karma a person turns the stream of compassion within to do his or her small part in helping the Cosmic Buddha instead of always greedily grabbing from Him. Compassion for the Cosmic Buddha is the beginning of Pure Love. In the Vimalakirti Scripture it says, "After initiation into the non-dual Dharma had been expounded, five thousand Bodhisattvas at the meeting were initiated (Transmitted) into it, thereby realising the patient endurance of the Uncreated." In this chapter of the Scripture, the Bodhisattvas all give their personal explanations of non-duality. When Vimalakirti finally expounds to them its True Nature in silence, they all realise the incredible patience of the Cosmic Buddha Who was willing to let them go on and on in their dualistic discussions of that which lies beyond Unity until they found the Truth.

Arguments as to whether or not ghosts are the figments of over-stimulated imaginations or something more have abounded for centuries. Zen, along with the necessary ceremonies, has the following explanation. Any violent acts that cause persons to die in states of fear or terror are likely to leave behind in the places where they were perpetrated such colossal karmic jangles that years later even spiritually coarse persons will at least sense that something is wrong in these particular areas. I dislike using the term "negative karma" to describe such jangles but it is the only apt description of which I can think. Simple delusion, doubt, fear or terror that is non-volitional at the time of death will cause karmic jangles resulting in catchable sparks and past-life experiences. Acts of violence, doubt, fear or terror that are *deliberately* (i.e. volitionally) created, as well as delusion that is deliberately spread, will leave behind such huge jangles that "haunting" of certain places may result from both the terror of the victims, who understood nothing else at the time of death and meeting the Cosmic Buddha and the evil of the perpetrators who were directing that terror. As far as Zen is concerned such "hauntings" are no more



real than is the ego of the average person. However, like the ego, they produce some very real-seeming effects and therefore must be dealt with in a real manner for, just as with past lives, which are ghosts that we carry about with us, so also hauntings are a reenactment of past karma manifesting as ghosts of past persons and activities that are rooted in a particular place. The "Secret Papers" explain how the cleansing of such places is carried out and Zen priests deal with such things frequently and successfully. The reader is advised to leave such procedures to the professional priest. Such large jangles need a lot more attention and skill than do the small sparks; amateurs, even presuming that they could get hold of the "Secret Papers," should *never* attempt the cleansing of such large jangles.

Visions are the positive side of the foregoing but should be regarded with caution and great respect for the following reasons.

Just as deluded karma will produce karmic sparks to teach us the advisability of *not* repeating our mistakes as well as showing us characteristic tendencies that we have developed from life to life that we would do better to cleanse, so visions are a prediction of *possible* future life but *not* a guarantee thereof. Let me make this plain. The main reasons why Zen is cautious about visions are as follows. Visions that occur *before* genuine conversion *may* be the result of wishful thinking on the part of the new monk or merely the result of using wrong posture. Hence the Zen Master tells the pupil to neither push them away nor grab at them. His advice is always to "just sit." After genuine conversion, however, and the cleansing of all karmic jangles as a result of seeing Suffering's Cause, visions are frequent and become an example of what the future joy of Union with the Cosmic Buddha is going to be like *PROVIDED* that the person concerned continues his training in the same state of purity of heart that he has now reached by cleansing his karma and that he does *not* return to his former deluded state by creating more karmic jangles. It is for this reason that Zen Masters never say that

they are enlightened. There is a time of climbing the mountain to be with the Cosmic Buddha; after descending it one must live in the world as if in the sky. The Zen Master is *not* released from all future karma resulting from his actions as a reward for ascending the mountain; he is just as much bound by karmic consequence as is everyone else. Should he commit acts that result in bad karma he will enter real hell for he knows the joy of Union with God from the visions and has turned his face away thus placing himself in the same position as Marlowe's Mephistopheles whose hell was not to see God.

The reality of the *pictorial* side of visions of the future is as real as the *pictorial* sides of both our past and our present existences. Our future with the Cosmic Buddha is assured so long as we keep the Precepts and turn the stream of compassion within. To have a vision of future life in which one sees the means by which one will die is to see the logical result of continuing as we are now. It is possible to change this by doing something different for we have free will at all times. Whereas past lives are a statement of what *has* been, future lives are a statement of what *can* be if we continue the way we are going but no guarantee of what *will* be. It all depends on us. Whether or not cleansed energy, or unsaddened love, takes form and shape after Unity with the Cosmic Buddha has been transcended (see Book of the Universal Law\*) matters not at all.

\* \* \*

*\*This will be the fifth in the current series which, in addition to The Book of Life, includes Rev. Kennett's The Wild, White Goose, Vols. 1 & 2, and How to Grow a Lotus Blossom.*



## A LETTER OF APPRECIATION

*(The following excerpt is from a letter written to Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett by one of the students at a University of California Extension seminar led by Rōshi Kennett in November, 1978.)*

"In class with the Rōshi I learned and reviewed some of the basic tenets of Buddhism, and had the great opportunity of seeing many of these ideals living in her. I was most impressed with the Rōshi's emphasis on the great love potential ('liquid love') of the cosmic Buddha and the teaching that even evil actions spring from love 'that has wobbled'. The Rōshi's personal testament of her kensho experience of death-rebirth strengthened my own intuitions that death of body is merely a change of form for the soul; I am delighted to hear her speak of her metaphysical experiences as naturally and matter of factly as she spoke of her English bulldog's skin problems. I am still carrying the words, 'Nothing stands between you and God but your judgement of yourself.' It is refreshing, and for me absolutely essential, to know that because of the insistence in Zen on *personal experience* of God and the necessity to know one's own truths through experience (direct), there is no need for embarrassing and antagonizing proselytizing: an inner surety of what is right for oneself opens the mind to accept with tolerance other religious paths."

\* \* \*

## ON CONVERSION AND BELIEF

(The following excerpts are taken from the book *Mother Teresa: Her People and Her Work*, by Desmond Doig, 1979, William Collins and Sons Ltd., pp. 136-138, reprinted here by permission of the publisher. Mother Teresa is the founder of the Roman Catholic Order of the Missionaries of Charity, two Contemplative Orders and charitable centres throughout the world.)

"Oh, I hope I am converting. I don't mean what you think. I hope we are converting hearts. Not even Almighty God can convert a person unless that person wants it. What we are trying to do by our work, by serving the people, is to come closer to God. If in coming face to face with God we accept Him in our lives, then we are converting. We become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever we are, and then by being better we come closer and closer to Him. If we accept Him fully in our lives, then that is conversion. What approach would I use? For me, naturally, it would be a Catholic one, for you it may be a Hindu, for someone else, Buddhist, according to one's conscience. What God is in your mind you must accept. But I cannot prevent myself from trying to give you what I have.

"I am not afraid to say I am in love with Jesus because He is everything to me. But you may have a different picture in your life. And this is the way that conversion must be understood--people think that conversion is just changing overnight. It is not like that. Nobody, not even your father or mother, can make you do that. Not even Almighty God can force a person. Even Jesus, though He was God Himself, could not convert the hearts of the people unless they allowed Him to.

"I want very much people to come to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, for that is true happiness. And what I have I want everyone in the world to have. But it is their choice. If they have seen the light they can follow it. I cannot give them the light: I can only



give the means. If I breathe into Kalighat and do some work there and really serve the people with love and sacrifice, then naturally they will begin to think of God. Once they think, they will come to know, and knowing they will want to love, and if they love they will want to serve."

"What we allow God to use us for, that is important. What He is doing through us, that is important....Because I belong to Him, the work is a means for me to put my love for Him into action. So it is not an end, it is a means. Because my vocation is to belong to God properly, love Him with undivided love and chastity, I take the vows.

"...If you really belong to the work that has been entrusted to you, then you must do it with your whole heart. And you can bring salvation only by being honest and by really working with God. It is not how much we are doing but how much love, how much honesty, how much faith, is put into doing it. It makes no difference what we are doing. What you are doing, I cannot do, and what I am doing, you cannot do. But all of us are doing what God has given us to do. Only sometimes we forget and spend more time looking at somebody else and wishing we were doing something else."

\* \* \*

## THE REAL WORK

Ed Eastwood

There is a lot of hard labour done in a Zen monastery, a fact which is written in scratches and scars on my hands, the fruits of inattention.

It is a simple but very difficult task to pay attention to the job in hand, whether it be washing up, dressing stone or just sitting. I find it very helpful *before* starting a job to remind myself to take care, since I tend to get into a frenzy if there is a lot of work to be done. This is when I bash my fingers. Then selecting the necessary tools and materials and laying them down neatly at the job site. One should have a good idea of what needs to be done. It is no use having too rigid a plan, but one which bends, so that the job unfolds and opens, one step at a time.

Our teachers are forever encouraging us to be mindful, and I find these constant reminders a help to just stop when I get into a froth of anxiety, and then to proceed slowly. It seems proper to finish the job as one began it, with care. That means cleaning up and putting the tools away for the convenience of others. I am finding these lines from Dogen's "Zazen Rules" to be literally true: "If your first step is false, you will immediately stumble."

\* \* \*

### SPRING AND SUMMER TRAINING PROGRAM

Throssel Hole Priory's new Guest Information Brochure, enclosed in this issue of the Journal, contains the Priory's program of events for the next half year (the gold centre pages). Also of interest to both old and new friends of Throssel Hole Priory is the complete list of the publications available through the Priory. The Priors of Throssel Hole Priory invite all friends and members of the Priory to join the Priory community in Zen training during the spring and summer months to come.



## DISCLAIMER

It is with some slight concern that the Trustees of Throssel Hole Priory note the present trend towards castigation of other religions seemingly prevalent in certain Buddhist publications in this country. Although Throssel Hole Priory may appear in the list of Buddhist organisations mentioned in these journals, the Trustees of Throssel Hole Priory wish to make it quite clear that they are not in agreement with any article or comments that may in any way be deemed to place any religion whatsoever in a bad light. We can of course only speak for ourselves and our own members and congregation. We are in no way saying that others may not hold any contrary opinion to us whatsoever--however, we do wish to make it plain that we are not in agreement with any organisation or periodical that speaks against any religious organisation, and that such publications, however "official" they may be regarded as being, either by the British government or by any other official body, cannot and do not represent our opinions on any subject unless they consult us first concerning them. Throssel Hole Priory is a daughter monastery of Shasta Abbey, Mt. Shasta, California, which is a daughter monastery of Dai Hon Zan Sōjiji, Yokohama, and, although we are politically autonomous, both are part of the Sōtō Zen Church of Japan. During the recent visit of the Supreme Patriarch, His Holiness the Very Rev. Kinei Otogawa, Supreme Patriarch of Sōtō Zen and Chief Abbot of Dai Hon Zan Sōjiji, these ties were reaffirmed this November, and it is the teaching of the Sōtō Zen Church that no member whatsoever shall speak derogatively or devaluingly of *any* religious organisation. The Registrar for foreign affairs at the Head Office, who also visited America with His Holiness the Patriarch, took careful particulars of all monks presently in good standing with the Sōtō Zen Church. Our members and congregation are advised that they should not accept anyone as genuine Sōtō priests *trained at Shasta Abbey* unless they possess an official I.D. card- this card will show their current rank or status (trainee, priest or Rōshi). The custom of issuing I.D. cards was started amongst the

Chinese priesthood many years ago, and a person who claims to be a Theravadin monk, for example, cannot get a night's lodging in any temple in Thailand without one from his own school of Buddhism. Thus the idea of I.D. cards is not something that we have originated, but rather an idea we have been forced to adopt for the purpose of protecting both our members and our congregation.

Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett  
Trustee

Rōshi Jisho Perry  
Trustee

Rev. Daishin Morgan  
Trustee

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## NOTICE

It has been reported that Bhikkhu U Thittila, a Burmese monk aged 82, was dead and Louise Funnell, one of our members in Ludlow, Salop, England writes to tell us that Bhikkhu U Thittila has recently written to her and sent her a copy of his own obituary from *The Middle Way*. He had undergone an eye operation in 1978 but he has recovered. She requested that we issue a correction to reassure any of his followers that he is alive and well. Besides the obvious fact that he is still alive, the Bhikkhu was distressed at the inaccuracies of the obituary. Mrs. Funnell reports that Bhikkhu U Thittila was sent to study English educational methods and report back to Rangoon University, he was a revered member of the Rangoon University staff and as such was conscripted to be a senior translator and news reader when Burma was overrun during World War II. During the Blitz in England Bhikkhu read of the shortage of stretcher bearers, left a comfortable lodging of millionaire Jack Coates at Milverton in Somerset, volunteered to be a stretcher bearer in London (discarding his robe for a tweed suit to avoid being given privileges as a priest), and lived in an attic off Tottenham Court Road. Evidently it was reported that he studied at Adyar for years when in fact he had been a guest there for six months to practice colloquial English; he was not "employed" but did help a professor compile an English/Burmese dictionary; although he is not allowed to leave Burma or receive foreign visitors it is a general policy of the Burmese government and not individually directed at Bhikkhu U Thittila. Mrs. Funnell was concerned that this information was not accurately conveyed and we offer it here in the aid of truth. Should it prove to be inaccurate or misleading we would be glad to offer further elaboration and correction.

\* \* \*



## BEFORE LUMBINI

by Siri Buddhasukh

(Along with greetings of the season from Dr. Buddhadasa P. Kirthisinge of the Maha Bodhi Society, Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett recently received a special issue of the *World Fellowship of Buddhists' Review* concerning the restoration of Lumbini, the Buddha's birthplace. The *Review*, published in Bangkok, has as its motto: "We hope for the best, prepare for the worst and do the possible." Among its aims are the unification of all Buddhists and the promotion of peace and harmony throughout the world. The following article is reprinted with the permission of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.)

*Kālo Yante Mahāvīra  
Sadevakam Tārayanto*

*Upasampajja Matukucchiyam  
Bujjhassu Amatam Padam*

*"Now is the time, O Brave One, that you should take birth in the mother's womb. Thereafter you will realise the Path of Deathlessness and transport the human and celestial beings across (the ocean of Rebirths and Redeaths).*

--Dhammapada

Quoted above was the verse uttered by the celestial beings in the *Tusita* Realm as the urge or invitation to the Buddha-to-be to descend from where he was dwelling and be born in the world of human beings. This in order that he would become the Buddha and teach them, as well as human beings, the Path of Deathlessness.

This verse gives us some valuable facts from the Scriptures as follows: Firstly, the celestial realm of *Tusita* is the one where dwell the Buddhas-to-be or, put in modern terms, those with highly altruistic character. Unlike celestial beings in other realms, those in this realm are more magnanimous or social-minded. They have at least had a glimpse of the truth how sensual enjoyment in all celestial realms is after all a bondage, an attachment and hence a kind of suffering. Even the

more delicate and profound "happiness" in the more advanced realm of Brahma<sup>2</sup>, to be attained to by attainment of absorption or *Jhāna* level of meditation, is still subject to impermanence, exposed to destructibility and is therefore not the Deathlessness.

Celestial beings in this realm are awaiting their turns to descend to the human world, so we believe, on various occasions, in various countries and with various positions on Earth. This depends partly on the need of circumstances, partly on their own tendencies and then partly on their own preference, or rather attachment, to any national group of people in particular. They might be known, therefore, sometimes as philosophers and religious teachers or founders, at other times as social reformers and still at other times as those who have come for the betterment of their countries in various ways. Eminent physicians, who help relieve the physical sufferings of their brethren through their discoveries; gifted musicians, whose works have uplifted the minds of their listeners, making them soar 'heavenwards',--to a condition 'beyond' their crude physical shells--even monarchs or leaders of countries who have freed their peoples from the yoke or domination of tyrants who enslave their peoples--all may be included in this category, --the category of those magnanimous and altruistic social-minded beings who have descended from their higher and happier condition to 'brave' all the sufferings of the human world, which will befall them in the form of old age and illness, along with criticism and opposition in all forms from those who do not, and sometimes would not understand them. But all these, it should be noted, are to be distinguished from teachers of perverse philosophies and doctrines--from musicians who drive their listeners to hysterical, fanatic and satanic dances, who drag them to the orgies and orgasms of sexual abnormalities and even to suicide, and from tyrannical leaders who crave for domination and enslavement of other peoples under the pretext of liberation. Frankly speaking, we do not hesitate to include David Livingstone, Mozart, Pasteur, Einstein, Florence Nightingale, Mahatma Gandhi, to name only a few, in the category of the Buddhas-to-be.

We are tempted to include, at the risk of offending our Christian brethren, their noble, all-compassionate, heaven-sent Christ as well in this category of the Bodhisattas<sup>3</sup> or future Buddhas. But they might think of us as belittling their Son of God. In that case, please forgive us (i.e. the writer). We have no such motive,--really never. In our own country, we would like also to include, for instance, King Naresuan,--the queenless monarch who had dedicated his time, efforts and life to casting off the yoke weighing on the neck, or rather the life, of his people. We know too little of world history to mention the warriors and monarchs of other peoples who have done the same thing. So we beg forgiveness for this omission.

Secondly, to 'take birth' anywhere else unavoidably means to 'die' from where one is born or is living at the moment. Put the other way rebirth means redeath (and vice versa, except in the case of an Arhant)<sup>4</sup>. This indicates how such a being deserves the title of 'a brave one'. Just imagine a person still living happily, in good health and with all the pleasure in life, who is told that it is now time for him to die. Again, imagine how that person is glad and willing to die and leave all his wealth and retinue behind, in order to go and help other people in other places. This reminds us of two instances of detachment, if not of actual death. The first is from the book *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, referring to the teacher,--the gull who was asked by his subordinates to stay and help them there but who said to the effect that there was also another group who also needed him. The second referred to the late Venerable Meditation Master *Phra Acharn Mun Bhuridatto* (whose biography used to be serialised in our *Review*) who refused the tearful imploring of a hilltribe people who wanted him to stay with them for the rest of his life. In fact they were hostile to him at first and he was then absolutely free to go away. Yet for their own sake he chose to stay until they were converted. Now that they were lovingly attached to him he found it more advisable to leave them since there were sure to be other groups deserving his help. A Noble Disciple



belongs to the people as a whole; he cannot be taken possession of or attach himself to anybody or any group in particular. So is a Buddha-to-be, who is willing, when the time comes, to leave all the pleasures of his life with the spirit of detachment.

Thirdly, it was said the the Scriptures that such a will to *Cuti* (in Pali terminology, literally "to move out") cannot be taken at face value as in the case of ordinary worldlings. "To move out" here means "to die". In the cases other than the Buddhas-to-be such a motive and behaviour would be a suicide. And in the case of other celestial beings it would be a forced departure, which means a regress. But when it concerns a Bodhisatta, who is motivated by an altruistic desire and who does so deliberately, it is neither a suicide nor a regress. On the contrary, it is indicative of magnanimity, self-sacrifice and a real progress. For what else could it be when we consider the fact that such an evolved being who is already blessed with all the pleasures of life is courageous enough to "move out" i.e. to leave all those things behind and "move down" i.e. die only to be born in a lower realm. This despite the fact that he has not yet exhausted his life-span there. In the case of ordinary worldlings it would certainly be a "sudden and untimely" death most undesirable to all.

Fourthly, why should he be asked to do so? Wouldn't it be better should he take the initiative of doing so himself? These might sound silly to those people who have never given even a passing thought to them, but there was at least a prominent author of an outstanding book who pointed out that the Buddha-to-be had to be informed of the time of his taking birth in the human world and that the Buddha after his Enlightenment had to be informed of his duty by the Lord Brahma were indicative of the fact that the Buddha was part of, and dependent on, the Absolute, the Brahma, the All-Knower.

To this viewpoint we have presented ours in the Magha Number of our *Review* Vol. XI no. 2 (March-April

2517/1974) from page 39 onwards. Here we quote from that issue part of our review of that book.

"In both cases there is a parallel in our everyday life. Generally the President, whether of the World Fellowship of Buddhists or of the United States or any other association, is to be *formally* invited to visit any country or preside over any social function. She (or he) must have known it already but is waiting for the circumstances that require her (or his) doing so,-- in this case an invitation letter confirming such an invitation or a secretary reminding her (or him) of that appointment. What wrong or disgrace should there be, even admitting that she or he might have forgotten such an appointment due to other engagements? After all, in the case of the Buddha, why should the inviters take pains to come and 'pray' to him unless they were themselves unable to do so?

In both cases it was obvious that the Buddha was invited, and in neither case was there anything to point to the fact that he had not known what was to be expected of him. From various accounts in the Scriptures, we know that the Buddha was equipped, among other virtues, with a quality called *Kāranavasikatā*: to do something in response to the situation that will necessitate it. This may be seen in establishing the rules of the Discipline. He never did so *before* there was a Bhikkhu behaving indecently and thus bringing a disgrace to that Bhikkhu himself or to the Order of Sangha<sup>5</sup>. In other words when there did not occur the circumstances that would necessitate a prohibition, he found it more advisable not to issue any prohibition (or in some cases special leniency) in advance. It could not be prevented, we might say, and was sure to take place sooner or later. In that case the Buddha, notwithstanding his knowledge of it beforehand, preferred to deal with it *after* the situation that necessitated it. This is what may be called *Kāranavasikatā*, literally translated 'to follow the dictates of causes'."

In short, we would like to point out the fact that he was invited or requested or begged, but not instruct-

ed, by those celestial beings.

Fifthly, that the Buddha-to-be dwells in the *Tusita* celestial realm which is one of the realms of sensuality or *Kāma-vacara-bhūmi*, does not in this case mean that he cannot dwell in the higher i.e. the Brahma realm of those who have attained to the *Jhāna* (Absorption) level of Meditation. That he was able to develop the *Jhāna* during the ploughing ceremony when he was only six years old was proof of this fact.

Before any being can be ready to become a Buddha, he must be equipped with all the fluency of *Jhāna*, the foundation of spectacular, psychic powers or *Abhinna*. These powers, of course, are not related to Enlightenment or the Cessation of Suffering and are not common to the Arahant disciples. But they are indispensable to one who is to blaze a trail for others to follow, who has to encounter criticisms, oppositions and challenges, both verbal and physical, especially in the pioneering days, from those who were crude, violent and envious. Such a being, who aspires to the task of teaching all that can be taught and training all that can be trained, must not merely 'pass the examination' or be mediocre in the compulsory subjects, so to speak. The Herculean task ahead requires him to score grade A or even AA in all subjects, whether compulsory or voluntary, be they major subjects or optional ones. He must be a versatile genius and must come off with flying colours, being able to cope with all challenges and ordeals that test and tax to the utmost his endurance power, his wisdom power and, not least of all, his psychic powers. Just think of the matted-haired hermit *Uruvela-kassapa*, the Finger-Necklace robber *Aṅgulimāla* and the renegade Bhikkhu *Devadatta* and we shall see how the attainment of *Abhinna*, in addition to that of Enlightenment, is absolutely necessary for a person in the position of a Buddha-to-be. That he preferred to stay in the *Tusita* realm was therefore because it would give him a better opportunity to help others than to enjoy



the bliss of *Jhāna* in the higher realm, where little activity in the service of others can be performed. Just think of the hermit *Asita*, who prophesied unconditionally that the infant Siddhattha would certainly become a Buddha, and also of the hermits *Ālāra* and *Uddaka*, his former teachers, who the Buddha said could not be approached for the sake of conversion and we shall see how the bliss of *Jhāna*, unless a person has become an *Anāgāmi* or Non-Returner, could lead him to a cul-de-sac as far as the Cessation of Suffering is concerned.

Such are what have come to make Lumbini what it has been for the period of more than twenty-five centuries: a holy place recommended by the Buddha himself as being worthy of worship and inducing Disenchantment or *Sahvega* of the lures of *Saṅkhāra* or the conditioned. However, there might be a protest, or at least a complaint, that what has been described so far about the 'other-worldly' matters has no relevance to the present life at all. Buddhism stresses the 'here and now', so goes the complaint or the protest, of what use is there to bother or worry ourselves with the 'other-worldly', which were the things of the past and could not be proved, being but legendary or mythical.

Well, to such a likely complaint we would like to offer our reply, which could be called a counter-complaint: that Buddhism stresses the here and now is, believe it or not, because there is also the 'hereafter' and then there is also the 'herebefore', so to speak. This, it must be borne in mind, is to be distinguished from the 'here and now' in the eye of the materialists such as the behaviourists and other extreme fanatical views worshipping money, publicity, quantity and body. Were religions to be stripped of these other-worldly matters they would cease to be called religious in the true sense of the term. Of course, there are charlatans, imposters and grotesque, unbelievable accounts relating to these 'other-worldly' matters, but, after all, the existence of the fake coins or bank-

notes points definitely to one thing: that there are the genuine ones that can be used as legal tender. Should conscientious Buddhists choose to dispose of the genuine coins and bank-notes, thereby throwing away 'the baby' as well as 'the bathtub'? Should we prefer to stand idle and let 'the fake coins drive away the real coins'?

Well, it requires a whole volume to discuss about how to distinguish the fake coins from the real ones, how to know what is the 'baby' and what is the 'bathtub' as far as these other-worldly matters are concerned. But we occasionally include in the pages of our *Review* articles and *Believe It or Not* items relating to this matter. More of them will be presented from time to time.

In conclusion, we would like to give our readers the following facts as food for thought:

(1) Admitting that the *Anusāsani Pātiḥāriya* or the Wonders of the Doctrine itself is supreme, it is doubtful how, without the *Iddhi Pātiḥāriya* or Wonders of the spectacular, psychic powers, which include other-worldly matters, the Supreme Doctrine alone can survive the upheavals and ordeals to this day.

(2) Buddhists should not be science-worshippers, treating all scientific verdicts as divine commandments and all scientists as archangels or delegates of God himself. Such an attitude is, believe it or not, superstitious, blind disbelief and therefore 'unscientific'. These attitudes are definitely unbuddhistic.

(3) What has made LUMBINI as it is--a holy place recommended by the Buddha himself as inducing *Disenchantment* or *Sanvege* of the nature of the *Sankhara* or the conditioned, is therefore what happened before it and what happened after it combined. How many people have been born there before, during and after the time of the Buddha? Yet what event of any significance has happened there that should be worthy of any venerated memory?

(4) What happened before Lumbini in another di-

mension of life is at least as important as, if not more important than, what happened at and after Lumbini on this planet Earth, where we 'stopover' or sojourn occasionally during our pilgrim flights through the vast, limitless space of our re-births and re-deaths.

(5) It is the writer's hope that such a fairly lengthy description of what had happened before Lumbini will serve to increase at least to a certain extent the value and significance of LUMBINI, where a massive reconstruction project is being launched to restore it, after centuries of neglect and isolation, to an equal footing with Jerusalem, Mecca and other foremost shrines of the world. To those, especially those Buddhists, who shun or loath whatever concerns the other-worldly matters, *all* accounts of the Buddhisatta or the Buddha-to-be would, BELIEVE IT OR NOT, fall flat. They would *all* be devalued, to become something like Aesop's Fables or fairy tales. The Buddha and his Arahant disciples would by accident be a finished product, starting and finishing his Buddhahood and their Arahantship within *one* life-time. But to those who accept, although with reservations, these episodes before Lumbini, in the realm of the hereafter or to be more precise in this case, the 'herebefore', the value and significance of Lumbini will considerably increase, inspiring them with a more profound impression and faith in the Buddha.

Thus Lumbini should evoke, in the minds of Buddhists, sacred memories of the past, which should imply not only the past twenty-five centuries on this planet Earth, but also the more remote past which must be calculated by an astronomical number of years. Compared with the latter past, the 25 centuries behind us would be but 'a few minutes' in the period associated with the arduous struggles, the ordeals and martyrdoms of the Buddha-to-be. Throughout this light-year period the Buddha-to-be had always been accumulating his virtuous qualities and accelerating his maturity. These he had done in the spirit of altruism and magnanimity, sometimes on the space-ship called Earth,



at other times on other celestial bodies in another dimension of life within the vast space of rebirths and redeaths.

*May this article, made up  
of pen and paper and ink, serve  
as bricks and stones and cement  
devoted on this occasion to the  
project for the reconstruction  
of LUMBINI.*

--Siri Buddhasukh

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Tusita Realm: the formless realm mentioned in Roshi Jiyu-Kennett's *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom*, p. 53.
2. Brahma Realm: the tenth stage of Buddha's Enlightenment; also called Dharma Cloud.
3. Bodhisattvas: "Enlightened beings," those who seek Enlightenment not only for themselves but for all living beings; those who undertake training to become fully enlightened Buddhas for the benefit of all beings including themselves.
4. Arahant: One who has attained Nirvana, realizing the meaning of no-birth and no-death.
5. Order of the Sangha: The religious community of the Buddha's followers.

## PRIORY NEWS

*The Winter.* Despite the severity of the weather this winter, the community at Throssel Hole Priory has fared well and we are now looking forward to an active spring. The Priory was completely snow-bound several times and we are sorry that some people were inconvenienced in their efforts to come to the Priory; we are hoping for a more temperate March and we look forward to seeing those who tried unsuccessfully to get here during the blizzards.

*Celebrations.* On 25 December we celebrated the Buddha's Birthday at the Priory. The beautiful ceremony in the Meditation Hall was followed by the exchange of gifts, a big feast, an afternoon of "fattening" and a traditional pudding in the evening. Several days later we welcomed the New Year with the traditional midnight ceremony. We would like to thank all the people who joined us for the holidays and helped make the celebrations this year so memorable.

*Lectures and Retreats.* Rev. Rōshi Hōgetsu Schomberg led a retreat in Dublin from 5 January to 7 January. The retreat was attended by 32 people of the Catholic faith. On the evening of 18 January, Rev. Rōshi Hōgetsu lectured at the Manchester University Buddhist Society and on 7 February she spoke to the West Allen Womens' Institute in the local village of Carrshield. In the first week of March, Rev. Rōshi Hōgetsu spoke at the Salisbury Centre in Edinburgh and, two days later, led a one-day retreat at the Centre.

*Animals.* The winter is always a hard time for animals. We regret that two of the Priory's ducks have died this winter. Both animals were given the full funeral services for animals. The rest of the animals have done well so far this winter, the major threat to the safety of the cats being the singeing of tails waved too close to open fires. The Priory's one goldfish ("L.L.Fish") has moved to the office: his water was getting so



cold that he was apparently beginning to do the fish equivalent of hibernation. He is again as active as ever.

*Donations.* We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to Throssel Hole Priory during the past few months through donations of money, food and household items. The Priory community received many gifts and cards during the holiday season and these contributed to our enjoyment of this festive time of year. Two gifts which will be especially noticable to the Priory's older friends are a carpet (in very good condition) which is being used in the community room of the main house and a beautiful Tibetan *thanka* depicting Tara (Kanzeon). This *thanka* is hand painted on silk (a *thanka* is a representation of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas or religious symbols which is used by Tibetan Buddhists to aid spiritual growth through their meditation upon the meaning of the *thanka*). This Kanzeon hangs now above a small alter in a room set aside as a meditation shrine. Again, we are very grateful for all these kind gifts.

\* \* \*

### COMING RETREAT IN THE SOUTH

Rev. Rōshi Kōshin Schomberg will lead a retreat in Southsea, near Portsmouth, the last weekend of March. For details please write to Mr. Peter Lavin, 36 Castle Road, Southsea, Hants. PO5 3DE (Mr. Lavin can be reached by phone during working hours at Portsmouth [0705]834704). Facilities necessitate limiting attendance so it is important to book in advance if you wish to participate.





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